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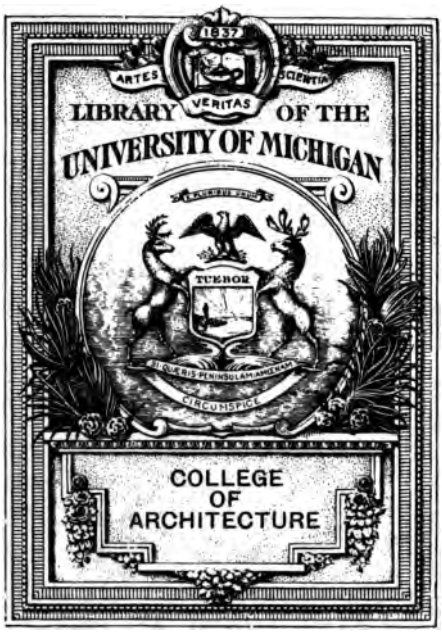
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THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF ENGLISH ARCHITECTVRE

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THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF ENGLISH ARCHITECTURE

I

THE nature of architecture, and the standards which may be applied to it, are threefold. It can be appraised as an art. It can be set forth as a science. It can be interpreted—like all else that has a place in history—as the symbol of the human forces which produced it, the visible and enduring record of the environment from which it sprang. Art, it is true, claims to be judged in the categories of beauty; but the imagination is restless, and, rarely standing content with these, seeks in a technical curiosity, in literary fancy or historical suggestion, new grounds of interest and more familiar admirations. If it finds for the qualities of the work of art some counterpart in the age which produced it, this discovery, though assigning no cause to the beauty we criticize, assists us, perhaps, to its interpretation. And architecture, held by its practical purpose so closely to life's general current, so linked with common occupation, and never, like the fine arts in their decadence, an irrelevant or secluded activity, lends itself to such inquiry with a special appropriateness. It is a focus of preferences, of instincts, and national capacities, which find elsewhere, perhaps, more momentous issues, but here, at any rate, a visible form. A work of utility architecture consciously is; a work of beauty it should be; of religion, after the ideal of Ruskin, it may be; but a symbol it must be. Climate, and the nature of mountain or plain surrounding them, are the

large conditions alike of a people's architecture and of their character, creating between the two some necessary correspondence. Government, and ideals of civilization or beauty, mould them both through countless adjustments; the forts and temples of a nation are the unconscious expression of what its politics more deliberately indeed, yet more intricately also and confusedly, are attempting to define. But this likeness is of a general kind; it holds only of the larger lineaments of character and the wider values of art—of such qualities as dignity, grace, power, or precision, which are the common ground of judgements both aesthetic and moral.

And because this limitation is soon overstepped and a moral significance is too easily pressed on architectural forms dictated only by a technical necessity or valid convention there has come a reaction against this treatment of the subject. The dogmatism of Ruskin fell into disfavour. The fatal monuments of a mistaken Gothic are powerful advocates against the method which inspired them. Into a definition of beauty the Hebrew prophets could not, it was felt, appropriately enter, and the verdict of the senses was unregenerately preferred to any principles derived from theirs. And indeed to find in the choice of a moulding or the carving of a grotesque a proof of a state's exaltation or of its pitiable abasement is a convenient theme for eloquence, but carries too seldom the conviction it invites.

This reaction was the outcome of the scientific spirit, which demanded for every activity its strict and appropriate treatment. It affected both architecture and the fine arts, but with a different result. For these claimed to withdraw into a sphere of autonomy, to exist for their own sake, and to be judged in their own values. Science itself could only touch them in an outlying province by

setting up a more exact standard of connoisseurship. But architecture, unable to divorce itself in the same way from life in general, was subjected rigorously to the laws in which life itself was explained, and refusing equally with the arts all moral interpretation, fell more readily than they into the terms of a purely scientific description.

Such a description would leave little room for an inquiry like the present. It sees in architectural evolution a necessary system proceeding step by step on a sequence dictated from without as new materials or new resources of science modify the constructional problem. Design, it is sometimes said, never, in the vital stages of architectural art, is more than the effort, tentative sometimes, to roof this or span that; it may happen upon beauty, but only in so far as it persuades us of its technical success, and the single significance which can reasonably be looked for in it is the significance of construction—the lucid statement in the finished work of the mechanical problem, and the means of its mechanical solution.

Yet even so, did architecture admit of such a resolution, national character would still be revealed in the structural problems which it sets itself. Aqueducts or forts, civic monuments or monasteries, St. Peter's or Versailles: these owe their existence to impulses divergent enough even were they all built to the foreordained patterns of constructive laws. And, of course, this is not so. There are more ways than one of solving a structural problem, even with given materials. Temperament is the factor which selects this solution rather than that. Tradition is merely the authoritative and established formula of these preferences, and style is visible tradition. And, since in architecture, least of all the arts, can the individual be independent of tradition, style in architecture gives us

the temperament of the race. So, while the Doric style is traced back to the primitive necessities of the wooden hut, its final form requires, none the less, the clear outline of a Greek ideal to explain it. Material difficulties are ever the foreground of the problem ; but it is not enough to lay these bare. Architectural design is a scientific effort, but it is an effort informed by hidden purposes and shaped to an unknown dream. Height or weight of masonry, the darkness or relief of its disposition, have their natural and implicit symbolism which guides the choice unawares. Absorbed in their structural endeavour, unconscious, it may be, of the deep affinities they create, Italy will find a scenic satisfaction, France its logic, the East will build with colour, and Rome subdue all with the ambition of its vaults.

We are justified, then, in seeking a like evidence of character in the architecture of England. But here there are some special difficulties. For such evidences are more impressive and more readily seized in the architecture of a distant civilization. The buildings of a vanished people have themselves contributed so largely to the impression we inherit of their ideals that it is but natural we should find some likeness between the two. And, once more, the task is easier, the results more reliable, when we deal with a civilization that is isolated and self-complete. The solitude of Egypt, the exclusiveness of Greece, and, in a lesser degree, the masterful dominion of Rome, give us an assurance that in the manner of their building we have the clear impress of characteristic purpose. But with contemporary peoples of kindred habit the outline is blurred by their mutual influences ; the individuality of each is sacrificed in the complexity of all. And England is one of these. If indeed we regard its architecture as representative of Western art, and set it

against the large development which, springing from the same root, passed under the transforming will of the East, we might compare it with the Byzantine process which followed out, in response to its special needs and native impulses, the problems of the dome and the principle of architectural colour. It would then stand out with the desired distinctness. But we should not then view it as exactly national, and we should be grounding our analysis on much that it holds in common with the work of other European peoples, whose conditions it shares, into whose ideals it enters, and with whom its architecture has advanced, step by step, to a more parallel conclusion. Complex in itself, in its racial constituents—inheriting some things, receiving others, and innovating only by insensible degrees—English history has its counterpart in English architecture. And, above all, there is this further difficulty that the latter is rather a series of experiments than an undeviating growth: a succession of reactions to the influences of France, Germany, and Italy. We have, then, to mark what modifying limits England imposed on the types they offered. And, while from the outside the impact came now from this quarter and now that, internally, in response to national phases in turn monastic, episcopal, democratic, and courtly, the centre will shift from the abbeys to the cathedrals, and thence in the fifteenth century to the parish churches and colleges, until, by a change of style—preserving there and in cottage architecture a long memorial of transition—it passed to the architecture of fashion and patronage, and became the vehicle of a new ideal. From these materials, the new and old alike, we have to collect the English tradition and find what is indicated, behind so much outward discontinuity, of a consistent purpose.

II

BEHIND the English architecture we know, behind the complexities of its Gothic and the careful attitudes of the Renaissance, stand the simple and imperturbable outlines of Saxon building. So far as we can discern it where so little is left, it employed a wooden roof, a western tower, tall and almost unarticulated, and a square east end. If its simple rectangle needed enlargement, it added, to left and right, expansions of a lower height than the main chamber. Centuries later, forgetting the apse, the spire, the complex planning, the vaults of stone, which in various combinations had intervened with such magnificent results, the English parish church, at a period when we were less than usual in touch with foreign influences, was once more rising with a square tower to the west, a square termination to the east, covered by a timber roof, and with transepts lower than the nave. And, having this form, it is without parallel in Continental architecture.

We have here a curious evidence, not certainly of a national style in the full sense, but of the presence, at any rate, of some native and identical force. And, since at favourable moments it could assert itself at least in the popular architecture, we must suppose it to have exercised throughout a latent and moderating control; and it is for this control, active beneath the dramatic movements of successive and competing styles, that we shall have to attend most particularly in the future. But, although Saxon architecture was in this sense national, it was in no way a nucleus. It points backwards, not forwards. That it came to an end at the Conquest is one of the few things that can confidently be

said of it. Few of its high west towers survived to be an example for their later counterparts. They served as a refuge from the Viking, failed as a refuge from the Norman, and were destroyed. The detail of it, and its derivation, the varieties of plan which seem to have existed beside that which we have described, its chronology, its affinities—all are obscure. In its knowledge of the arch and vault there lives, perhaps, one of the few traces of the Roman occupation, which, four hundred years before, had brought the unfulfilled promise of a new nation and a national architecture to spring from the fusion of Roman and Briton. Later, the ecclesiastical Rome of Gregory, by the mission of St. Augustine, left the impress of the basilica.[1] In one respect the basilican form was almost consistently resisted. The great chancel-arch of the basilica gave place to a recessed opening, narrow, and perhaps curtained. This instinct for the value of concealment underlies, in later history, the prevalence in England of screened altars; as though the same preference persisted there which withdrew the churches themselves, and the manors, into the folds of the hills, making them in their retirement so delightful to come upon. That, at any rate, rather than the desire for prominence, is the choice which governs the setting of most English architecture other than the military castles, unless, as at Durham, some great opportunity was offered for display.

Here, in this Saxon architecture, what we see probably, for the most part, is a clumsy native endeavour to build, at the direction of the priests who brought Christianity

[1] This was a plan frequently adopted; and in the 'long-and-short' masonry of Saxon quoins, connected, as they sometimes are, by rude arches, we seem to have an imitation of the classic pilaster. The baluster, too, in its windows, is a trace of this influence.

from those parts, in the style of that contemporary Italian work—of Lucca, for instance, or Ravenna—which they had never seen. Little was indigenous. The influence of the old wood-forms of the race was not great. Yet some originality must be allowed these early native builders, both in what has been already touched on, and in their attempt to decorate their shafts; and their characteristic long nave and tall tower had within them the germ of beautiful composition in that contrast between vertical and horizontal lines which the English were to make the distinctive merit of their Gothic. But the most remarkable of the features we have mentioned was the square east end; for that appears to have prevailed even before the coming of the Saxons. The British missionaries carried it to Ireland, where we find it: a curious feature, surviving, by some strange power of national preference attaching to it, from before the time of Constantine to our own day. It is, as it were, an architectural symbol of the spirit of English independence; a defiance in turn to the Roman, the papal missionary, and the Norman conqueror. It had no place in the architectures which these introduced; yet, like that old liturgy or 'use' of Sarum which England so long maintained in distinction from the general practice of the Church, it held its ground. There may possibly have been some ceremonial link between the two. Independence, at any rate an unwilling and, as it were, provisional acceptance, of forms dictated from without,—this is a constant quality of our architecture, hardly less than of our political and ecclesiastical history. It is an undercurrent to be taken into account even when the foreign formulas appear to prevail, and will find almost simultaneous vent, there in the triumph of the Perpendicular style, here in the Protestant reformation.

Saxon churches were not uniformly of the simple character suggested by the remains. In the seventh century Wilfred had erected at Hexham a great columned church : ' ornamenta huius multiplicis domus de auro et argento lapidibusque pretiosis,' says a contemporary, ' neque enim ullam domum aliam citra Alpes montes talem aedificatam audivimus.' It is conceivable that, at the Conquest, the native architecture of England was working, though more backwardly than the Norman, towards a Romanesque style of a homogeneous national kind. But too often in the past its effort had flowed and ebbed ; its progress had been too intermittent and too signally reversed for this to be altogether probable. Four hundred years after the fine promise of Hexham, it was once more incompetently at the beginning, and struggling with an execution so primitive, that it would not be worth delaying thus far upon it, were it not for an indication there of a national factor so stubborn and profound.

The coming of the Conqueror swept the outward expression of this factor, for the moment, out of sight. The Romanesque architecture of the North of France, cut off far more completely than the Southern from the influence of Constantinople, had not like Périgueux, for instance, or Angoulême, troubled itself with the dome : nor indeed was the dome best adapted to the roofing of a narrow basilican plan. A vista of vaulted arches and not the concentric unity of Eastern work was to be the form in which the North was to express itself. This new and vigorous Romanesque—' novum genus compositionis '—which the Normans were developing in France, had already, sixteen years before, found an English outpost in the Confessor's work at Westminster. Already the ornament, at least, of the Saxons had come under

its influence. But the magnificence and energy of its achievement after the Conquest has hardly a parallel. Not even the Gothic outburst in thirteenth-century France equals the effort by which, in a scarcely subdued dominion, nearly every great native church was rebuilt and the cathedrals of the future laid down; and this by a scanty population, in masonry of almost overpowering mass, and on a scale of plan adequate to the most brilliant period of later history. What was the character of a movement so impressive? We cannot immediately call it national.

Nothing, for architecture, is more important than the nature of the political or social unit to which it has reference. The self-centred life of the commune develops one type of building; the armed city-state has another; we can see it, with the hand of the Middle Ages still laid beautifully upon its silence, beside the walls of Ferrara. And different, once more, is the architecture of centralization. Such an architecture looks less to the individual site where it springs, than to the controlling and single thought by which it is informed. Such was the architecture of Rome, imposing on outpost, camp, and settlement a symbolic uniformity, and raising its least construction, from the Euphrates to the Tagus, to the level of an imperial style.

To this ideal of uniformity, of centralized power, the Roman Church, and in particular the great monastic Order of Benedict, had now succeeded. The ideal was expressed within narrower limits and in ecclesiastical terms, but it determined the form of our English cathedrals for a hundred and fifty years, and ruled their plan by force of precedent even when it had ceased to exercise its direct control. But because in England alone it was associated with the episcopate, it was only there that

the Benedictine plan could influence the cathedrals. Thus it came about that a cosmopolitan ideal received in England a distinctive expression and became the starting-point of a national tradition. Monasticism is in essence exclusive, and the peculiarity of this plan was, practically, the reduplication of our naves, so as to separate the monks behind their double screen at the east, from the worship of the laity at the west. Such a plan was, it is evident, in accord with the English instinct, already noticed, for the beauty of a withdrawn effect. There was a lengthening of vista; the eye was drawn down the great march of columns to a mysterious altar; and the space between was thwarted and enlarged by a cross-light subtly varied and intermittent.

Such a pronounced extension of the eastern limb created an effect almost like that which charmed St. Paulinus of Nola, writing to Severus of those two basilicas there, once separated by an orchard, but now, as he describes them, united by a colonnade and with the intervening walls destroyed.

> Attonitis nova lux aperitur, et uno
> Limine consistens geminas simul aspicit aulas.
> Ter geminis geminae patuerunt arcubus aulae
> Miranturque suos per mutua lumina cultus.

The naves of St. Albans, Winchester, and a score of other cathedrals and churches thus came into existence. And their extreme length was emphasized by a constructional limit to their breadth. For the abbeys of this period received not stone-vaults, but, what was also to be an English predilection, an oak roof. Thus their breadth was determined by the wooden tie-beam, not easily to be obtained in lengths exceeding thirty feet. Later, when the stone vault supervened, the presence of the oak roof caused it to take a flatter and more low-

springing form than the vaults of France. Everything tended to render permanent that low and broadly lateral beauty of contour, that monkish seclusion of the long cathedral with its cloister and close, which were so congenial that the secular canons, when they came, preserved and copied them; and the contrast was being made ready in the eleventh century with which England was, in the thirteenth, to confront the high and city-built ventures of a French Amiens.

In spite of this, for the English of that time the Benedictine influence was not a national one. On the one hand, it was in itself—in the ideal which underlay it—cosmopolitan; on the other, it was employed in the service of the invader. It was part of the Conqueror's policy that these great architectural settlements should be garrisons as well as monasteries. They guarded the border against the unconquered Welsh, and kept hold over the restless districts of East Anglia. And, thirdly, the plan of its architecture was in part foreign; so that we find, under cover of the Cistercian reformation, the native preference for the simple square east end will re-assert itself, and the apses of these early cathedrals will in almost all cases sooner or later be rejected. But just as we assimilated the Norman racial infusion with which these cathedrals were associated, so there was much in their architecture which may be called prospectively national. Only reluctantly did we part with its massive forms, and in its general dimensions we retained it to the end.

The wooden roofs of this first period seem in many cases to have been, from the first, provisional. Native carpentry was plentiful, but the supply of skilled masons must have been utterly inadequate for the almost simultaneous erection of so vast an architecture. But the

substructure is nearly always clearly intended for a stone vault. And, technically, what distinguishes Norman work is not so much the round arch as its dependence, for the support of its vaults, upon thickness of wall rather than on an intermittent abutment. There results a preponderance of closed over open walls, of gloom over light, of the supporting masonry over its load, such as makes the dignity of Durham, and in which, though we may call it unscientific, what is waste for science is yet the condition of monumental form.

And, indeed, these piers of Durham are the massive foundation of a great tradition, and much might be taken from them and their grandeur not become weakened. That tradition has been the inventor for the world of little that is generically new, but to whatever of foreign style came beneath its hand it lent some of this sufficiency and large repose. It seldom lost sight of the static quality of good architecture, nor of its source in the excess of apparent over necessary power, which for science is waste, and which in this Norman work has the simple and elementary greatness of art. 'Architecture,' said Inigo Jones, thinking of a style diverse enough from this, 'should be simple, masculine, and unaffected.' Here, to others of higher imaginative order, these qualities were added, and in supreme degree.

Yet in this static repose Romanesque architecture, neither in this country nor another, could remain. Ever since, in the experiments of the Lombard settlers, Europe had ventured to go beyond the basilican form, architecture had been in search of a solution. For us, with the whole sequence in sight, not the next hundred years only, but the entire period seems one of 'transition'. Roman work resting its circular vaults on walls twenty feet thick, or spanning its square spaces by the inter-

section of two barrel-vaults, was a finished thing and inert. Romanesque for all its years up till now was essentially unfinished. It had set out to vault a basilica, but a vault raised on round arches made the roofing of any but a square space difficult; to stilt the arches was unsightly, and the elliptic rib which was the vault's necessary diagonal exerted a great thrust, which, while it set a limit to endeavour, necessitated also, at a time when the conveyance of it was most difficult, a great quantity of material. So in England, in these great masses of its piers and arches that seem so final to the eye, something was yet latent and stirring towards life. A problem had been undertaken which the Romanesque style was only to resolve by ceasing to exist. Gothic when it came was not a spirit only, but a solution.

Two important characteristics of our architectural habit now became apparent. The first is conservatism, an unwillingness to part with what it has once made its own. This was now displayed markedly in the East of England, where, as late as the third quarter of the twelfth century, Romanesque building continued to prevail, and here a few years before this the naves of Peterborough and Ely were built in the old manner. The second point is the strong local character which our architecture possesses. All through its history this differentiation, this provincial quality in it, is well marked. Partly, no doubt, it springs from that same conservatism, which would give force to exclusive craft-traditions in each neighbourhood, partly from the peculiar territorial loyalty which, later, we shall have to notice as a national influence. Partly it is a result of English geological conditions which give such marked determination to local materials and thus vary local style. In illustration of this the progress towards Gothic was now strikingly

uneven. Hard in the North where the quarries are hard, it became delicate in the West, where the material favoured the new foliated tendency. The South, more directly under French influence, was nevertheless gaining individuality by its use of shafts of the black marble which it commanded at Purbeck. The East, as we have seen, was remaining faithful to the Romanesque tradition. Meanwhile there arose no less than a hundred Cistercian foundations as an outcome of the new reforming movement within the Benedictine Order. These seem to have showed the chief advances towards Gothic, and its readiest acceptance.

There arises at this point a debate as to how far the style which finally emerged can be isolated as the single product of France. This dispute should at first sight be a central one for an examination which is attempting to define the national element in our architecture. But, so presented, the subject is somewhat barren. Perhaps it would be better to say that two styles finally resulted, and that if the definition of Gothic is founded exclusively upon that which appeared in France, and the claim of England rejected because its work does not tally at all points with this definition, the argument is a *petitio principii* or becomes merely verbal. It is inappropriate to treat an organic growth, which was in process simultaneously in many places although at different stages, as though it were a sudden, and, so to say, portable invention.

We have seen that the close of the twelfth century found that last solution of the vaulting problem which had been, as it were, the final cause of the existence of the preceding architecture of the West. The process had led to the creation of styles which, for all their satisfying grandeur, were constructively—or at least

economically—deficient and were sure in due course to be superseded. Where exactly the final structure was to be crystallized depended on the varying momentum which a widely distributed endeavour might obtain in this country or in that. Now, in the political conditions of the time, England and France were more fully isolated than they had been in the previous century. Even within England itself it has just been seen that it was possible for independent traditions to be carried on side by side. It was possible, therefore, for several distinct expressions of the Gothic spirit to come into being.

But amid these different manifestations of the Gothic spirit there was one pre-eminently logical—an effort so reasonable that it could be apprehended as a science, no less than practised as an art, and reduced to an equation while it was followed as an ideal. This was the Gothic of the Île-de-France, which gathered up into the impetus of a single intellectual experiment all the most typical impulses of spiritual mediaevalism. And, because of this wholeness and consistency, convenient enough for criticism attempting to understand the period, there is some justice in regarding the Gothic of Amiens and Notre Dame as the type of the Gothic purpose in general. Yet they could not be the sole type of Gothic art. The very unity of effect at which they aimed, its very singleness of construction, though presenting themselves so readily for definition, are at variance with a spirit essentially manifold in its resources—itself the artistic expression, almost, of multiplicity. What gives the architecture of the Île-de-France importance here is not that we may set it against our own as the criterion of what Gothic should be, nor yet as the parent-art from which English Gothic sprang, but as eliciting, by the English resistance

to a foreign method so imposing, all the qualities most properly national in our own.

And although this particular moment was one of comparative separation, yet if we look at the whole course of architectural evolution in the two countries, the pressure towards uniformity, especially in the earlier stages, was very remarkable. Each was living within the same communion; the great ecclesiastics—who were also the controlling architects—were interchanged; Stephen Langton, at the moment he was Archbishop of Canterbury, was Chancellor also of the University of Paris; and master builders came to England from the Crown dominions across the Channel. Those who would prove a French origin for our English Gothic can point to the fact that William of Sens rebuilt the eastern parts of Canterbury. But if the pressure was great, the resistance was the more significant.

There is no doubt that, in point of development, the French architecture had at this period taken the lead. Borrowed or native, our approaches to Gothic were, in either case, relatively backward. It would not, however, be fair to argue from this indication alone to an inferiority in our architectural genius. For the external circumstances were widely different in the two countries, and it was only perhaps by political accident that the French activity in building, not in itself more remarkable than our own of the previous century, coincided with the technical discoveries which made the new style possible. It was not to be expected that we, who were already so richly provided with cathedrals, should put forward an effort equally fertile with that which the secular conspiracy of Crown and communes occasioned in the France of Philip Augustus. And the political situation which gave the French movement its greater extent was no

less a factor in its difference of style. Democratic, municipal, and comprehensive, these great halls of the French cathedrals, so wide, so full of light, and gaining from the concentrated endeavour which produced them a singular consistency of design, were in significant contrast to the English choirs with their monastic associations. Already, from the rehandling of many of them, these were beginning to take on their characteristic variety of style. The pointed work of a new transept, or more commonly, as at Canterbury, of a new east end, were mixing with the massive Norman pillars of the nave; and even the more complete reconstruction of Chichester allowed a few round arches to remain. Continuity and anomaly: the one implied the other; and, as in their political fabric, so in their architectural, the English were willing that both should remain. And these mixed cathedrals, with their growing richness and delicacy towards the east, and their lazy beauty of indulgence, gained in interest what was lost in consistency, and now after eight centuries of like treatment approach at times to those dramatic conjunctions which dead arts and past imaginations have left on the deeply civilized soil of Italy.

That there was just now on the side of the English some lack of scientific initiative must, nevertheless, be admitted. Not only was the use of pointed vaulting late in its introduction—save for a curiously isolated instance at Malmesbury Abbey—but when it came it was often without constructive significance. The shafts had in many cases no connexion with the vaulting, or else, as at Salisbury, instead of springing from the floor of the nave they rested on corbels at the triforium stage; sometimes the vault was given unnecessary ribs; the English masonry, too, was less regular, less articulated

than the French; and, finally, the structural idea of the whole fell short of that entire coherence of part with part which was the key of the Gothic method.

In consequence of this it is sometimes argued that the evidences of Gothic in England were too varied and indecisive to make it possible that a native inventiveness of any consistency underlay them. Its final introduction is then attributed almost wholly to the rebuilding of Canterbury choir under a French mason. Here, 'iusto set occulto Dei iudicio,' says the monk Gervase, the beautiful work of Conrad—'hactenus ut paradisus delitiarum delectabilis'—was suddenly burnt to the ground. The building which replaced it was certainly the most Gothic structure by then existing in England. But although this was begun under the supervision of William of Sens, yet work distinguishable from his, mature in its Gothic character, though of an English stamp, was left at Canterbury by the master who, after four years, succeeded him: 'alius quidam, Willielmus nomine, Anglus natione, parvus quidem corpore, set in diversis operibus subtilis valde et probus.'

For us the important point is the general character of the divergence, not here only, in the detail of Canterbury where French and English Gothic stand side by side, but in all the building of the period that immediately followed. The chief defect was perhaps a certain failure to unite decoration and construction in their full Gothic identity. The western front—at Wells, for instance, or Peterborough—was too often designed as a mere screen, without correspondence, either in the height or width of its divisions, to the section it concealed. But in extenuation of this, making it at least a less prominent defect, it must be said that the true English façade was always the great lateral one, from east to west.

The grand length of this, already noticed, was now still further increased by the frequent construction of square-ended lady-chapels, supplanting, as though to eradicate the last vestige of what might seem alien and unassimilable, the old apses of the Norman. By this means a composition was obtained through which the eye is carried by successive stages to the central tower—a feature intended from the first, though rarely, till a later date, completed. The repose of this grouping was accented by the reluctance, in spite of cheap labour and costly material, to open out the wall-space. Lancet windows were long retained. Thick walls are the main reliance in the construction even of Salisbury. Everything made for a low, broad beauty, and a reserve of power. Only by the delicate shafts of our decoration, and by our custom of leaving open the triforium arcade, was the pervading solidness relieved.

There was little of this repose in the Gothic of France: no wide enclosure with chapter-house and cloister, no concession to habit and old preference; only, over the town roofs close against it, a great façade in a sudden and towering preponderance. Everywhere there was a concentration of upward lines; and from every stone in the structure was exacted a dynamic activity, a contribution to the single and hazardous balance of the whole. And this equilibrium, standing only by a mutual tension and strife within it of its several parts, was the cause of an element, always present to it, of excitement and desire, a gathering effort to impart the illusion of motion and become—as in some morning mist it might actually appear—a tracery of stone, self-sustained and unsupported. It was in contradiction to all that in architecture we unconsciously look to see—of the downward pressure of its masonry, of the stable grasp of it

upon the earth, its natural mass distributed indeed in delicate proportion yet always existing there palpably to the sense as a physical thing obedient to a physical law. And into this apparent defiance the English tradition would not follow. It had too firm a hold of monumental principle and material character, and was unwilling to surrender these for a logical conclusion. Consequently it never overreached itself. England had no Beauvais. Yet the Gothic it failed to reach or neglected to attempt is, none the less, of all achievements one of the highest and most expressive. It stands beside the clear formula of the classic with a strange but complementary beauty, and a final worth. Round such an architecture, so ardent for flight—a petrified motion poised and maintained in an eternal unrest—it is natural that the fugitive passions of the Middle Ages should have gathered, and that to it, later, our own untranquil vision should sometimes regretfully have looked back.

The English style, then, of this phase of Gothic which bears its name, lingered a little in its archaic habit and allowed the complete form to be divined within it rather than forced from it into expression. And if this arose partly, as has been said, from lack of science, there is, for art, no discredit in the relative conservatism by which our architecture was characteristically—it might seem deliberately—arrested. So often is it true that the most perfect moment precedes the final achievement of desire ; the next effort brings into view a finished and affirmative work, but it destroys, on the instant that it supervenes, the element of promise. All becomes explicit ; the reserved suggestion vanishes, and the mature attainment fills in, with a definition almost disappointing in its clearness, the outline which, before, it had been left us imaginatively to supply.

This close of the twelfth century was indeed for architecture a time of national assertion, not in England alone and France, whose contrast we have analysed, but in Italy also, and Germany, and Spain. There was to ensue a period of assimilation. But even after the recrudescence of building which followed the removal of the Papal interdict and the close of the disastrous times of King John, the culmination of our style was slow. When it came, we mark it, in construction, by its fuller acceptance of the flying buttress. At Durham what of these buttresses had existed had been heavy and hidden within the aisle-roof—a method which never wholly deserted our tradition; at Lincoln they had crept out diffidently over the triforium-roof into the open air; now at Exeter they become frankly external, assertive, and accented by pinnacles. But to the French use which superimposed two such buttresses it never became accommodated. Only in a few works where the French influence was strong, as at Westminster, is it employed, and it belonged, by the heights to which it rose and for which its support was necessary, to an ideal of architecture not, to us, congenial.

More characteristic of the climax was a certain abandonment of simplicity. Henry III had been bred in the court of St. Louis. A royal character was to come into English art, and a reflection of the magnificence of the Sainte-Chapelle. And this was to increase with the succeeding reigns, leading to Exeter, and Ely's octagon. It was an architecture of luxuriance and natural display. Life had become an heraldic festival, and, for the great at least, a perpetual procession. So it was with architecture: that also must be 'decorated', the name we have come to give it, here defining appropriately the ideal. Rich in its cusps, its mouldings, and its traceries

—the last designed with a complexity that was soon to receive, in becoming curvilinear, a flame-like motion of its own—it had the colour of flame also in the glass within it, which now gained its fullest depth and a like richness to the mason's work. A century that moved like this one on the borderland between life and art, and fell naturally into the spectacular beauty on which its imagination was always dwelling, required such a setting. Here also it was fitting that the Gothic of Europe should reach its greatest uniformity, the current of English life being swept for an instant into the common chivalry and pageant of the time. Later, among the nobles of the English Renaissance, this desire for a setting was once more to play its part; but always, in that case, with something of mimicry in its attitude, as though conscious that not of this sort was the natural way of English life, and seeking for its architectural expression a style which, however beautiful, was, for them at any rate, quite exotic.

This time, for their more highly-coloured spectacle, princes and princely ecclesiastics had their material closer to hand. Gothic tracery, Gothic gateways and chantries, could be ever increasingly enriched. It was an elaborate architecture, almost beyond reason; but the whole impulse of chivalry had in it this rather artificial element, as perhaps must any attempt to gather life up into an imaginative form. But it was, at the root of it, Latin; and although England was just at this time informed and penetrated by it, and for the moment whole-hearted and spontaneous in its acceptance, it was for the moment only. Yet how spontaneous that acceptance was we can see in the English origin, now admitted, of the style which came to typify this flame-like spirit. We brought the Flamboyant into existence,

but there we left it. Some Northern asceticism checked us, and an instinct for the prose of architecture as a thing not to be wholly lost from sight converted these wreathed and mounting traceries into a symmetry of austere lines, almost harsh in their rigidity.

III

So, dramatically, came into existence that manner of building which, beyond all others, was our own creation, and which, beyond all others, has, by many, been assailed. If to have embodied a new constructive principle be the one criterion of originality, then only in a limited degree can what followed be called a style. But if it counts for anything to have withstood natural evolution, to have shut out contemporary example, and to have reversed a process we had ourselves initiated, Perpendicular architecture must be held to show some invention and, at the least, a native vigour.

The change was more than sudden; the old magnificence, literally, died. The Black Death passed over it, and few perhaps were left surviving who had the art, even had they the will, to continue in its tradition. It was left to France, itself only now recovering from a time of plague and wars which had given its architecture a yet more serious check, to bring that to its issue. Once more the strands of Gothic diverge, and England elected to follow out a style based on the panelled design which had already found employment among the Gloucester chantries and tombs. It was a method which was seen to lend itself to the new zeal for stained glass, and to the new fashion which, by a necessary evolution, had

come to prevail there. The old foliations had become as irksome to the artist as they must always have been to the glass cutter. The panel, as applied to window-construction, provided an ideal dimension for what had passed from a merely decorative art, reconciling form to colour, to a figure-art, which asked, above all, for an upright space. It was, in fact, in every way a method of convenience: applicable to every surface and every situation, depending for its effect entirely on iteration, easily executed and, consequently, the more cheaply procured, it was well in accord with the democratic sentiment which was beginning to prevail. So manageable in its principle, and so orderly, it was a style uniquely capable of administration and delegated design. As such, and in obedience to an English instinct for those qualities, it was chosen by William of Wykeham for the works which, in several quarters, he now had under control. At Oxford, where there flickers in the vestry window of Merton the earliest flame, perhaps, of unfulfilled 'flamboyant', we have also, at New College, the first beginnings of the style which took its place. It was indeed specially fitted for a collegiate architecture, and it has here an adaptive beauty which, in later stages, was sometimes lost in monotony. The 'four-centred' depressed arch is as yet only employed where, as in doorways, it had convenience; elsewhere the pointed arch, though in greater discipline of form and tracery, is still maintained. Throughout all there is a fine order, and a complete faithfulness, within a large scale, to the needs in view. Wykeham, from his immense architectural influence at its inception, may still, in some sense, be regarded as the founder of our national style.

If the practical quality of that style was significant, so also was its sense of material limitation, its regard for

the natural suggestions of wood and stone. The timber roofs of this period are types of a lasting predilection of the English builders and of a capacity they had for giving effect to the character of the substance they employed. The very renunciation of the Flamboyant had been the self-defence of just this instinct. To use stone as a ductile thing, to render it pliant and almost molten in its curves, was to contradict too plainly its innate and physical identity. The beauty of the Flamboyant was worth its price, but the English could not be its buyers. Instead, by a notable reaction, they expressed in their masonry not its inert resistance merely, but a tenseness which was in exaggeration of the facts.

Thus the chief fault in our national style came from the over-emphasis of a national quality. The delight in stained glass led to another defect which was less characteristic. The monumental nature of architecture which, usually, we so jealously safeguarded, was sacrificed; the walls became transparent, and the church a lantern, over which the vault was lifted upon piers of coloured light. Yet this too had a beauty of its own which we must take into account before we criticize a Perpendicular building where the old glass is lost, and the intermediate ribs are left standing in all their insufficiency. It was after all upon a skeleton, and not the living thing, that most of Ruskin's invective was here, with something less than justice, spent. Nevertheless this was a use of colour not properly architectural. A race with a profounder sense of it had given colour an equal prevalence and a more fitting place when they shallowed the Byzantine vaults to receive it and overlaid their massive construction with the moulded grandeur of mosaic.

But the innovation of the English style most splendid in its result arose in part from the very lack of science

which has already been noticed. Science and art, the two contributing factors in all architecture, but especially in Gothic, were perhaps not altogether at accord; and science was difficult and hazardous; difficult, at any rate, to the English builders, who multiplied, apprehensively, their shafts and ribs in places where construction did not demand them. We have already seen how at an earlier period they had often introduced into their roof-vault an intermediate rib which was unnecessary. Now, since this had no proper abutment, cross-ribs were introduced into the vault, and bosses applied to the points of contact. And next, with that transference of attention from line to space which had already affected the tracery of their windows and which was the momentous feature of this reaction, they gathered up these ribs into their separate systems, and produced the fan-vault. Thus the failure of science led to the beautiful intricacy, otherwise lost to architecture, of King Henry's chapels at Cambridge and Westminster. A redundant intricacy, perhaps; but in a system which, even when the intelligence apprehends it, can never in all its detail be grasped, as a dome is grasped, by the unconscious movement of the eye, such redundance carried no aesthetic disqualification. Indeed, like the redundant massiveness of Durham, which also had come from a like ignorance of building, it has, in the sense it gives of security, an architectural fitness of its own.

Such, save for a lingering trace of it surviving long after in minor crafts and places remote from change, was the close of English Gothic, and of our attempt to define, in the mediaeval idiom, an architecture suited to our race. It had rejected motion for rest and energy for order, and by the straight and level lines of which it made its choice it prepared the way for the architecture

of the South. Austere and firm, then, but also, in its own place, splendid, it was an architecture at once democratic and regal. Ecclesiastical in the old sense, it was no longer. The taste for an ordered richness, and the desire for something more determinate, if at the same time less vital, than the full profusion of Gothic ornament—these, too, were to be satisfied by the arts of the Renaissance. But the freedom of our architecture, and its native fitness, Italy could not replace. Only by imposing themselves upon the new form could they survive.

A new art does not spring without prelude and preparation, nor an old one pass without a sequel. We have seen that there were elements in our latest Gothic, and in the temperament it expressed, which foreshadowed the Renaissance and made ready for it. Two links in the transition have yet to be considered: the military architecture, and that of the villages. The cottages carried on in so unbroken a continuity the tradition of Gothic building amid the forms of later times, that they fall less readily into periods, and may be discussed at a later point. The position of the castles, in this subject, is more peculiar. Their history has been overshadowed by that of the cathedrals, and rightly; for whatever picturesqueness they now possess in their austere estrangement, they had little in them of conscious art. We cannot look to them for an expression of national character. Before architecture can give that, its builders must have had their choice in some degree unfettered. But these feudal castles were, at the outset, the same in one county as in another. They were determined entirely by considerations of defence, compelled and moulded at every point by a tactical necessity. What individuality

they had was topographical only. What they could signify was only the relative weakness and strength of each part of their natural site; their proportions, their dignity and menace, pointed to nothing more. Accidentally to their purpose there followed from this close attention to contour, this correspondence of form to opportunity, a beauty wholly unintended. The fortress is, as it were, humanized by the reflection it gives in every feature of the movements of men, their attacks, and their retreat. Consequently, by this constant reference to human stature and motion, the scale is well maintained. But purposed variety and the play of artistic preference had here no place.

And, apart from this, the very aloofness of the feudal fortress which gives it so much of its effect, meant an estrangement from current interests which would in any case disqualify it somewhat as a national expression. A castle was, at the outset, a royal prerogative, and long remained in the hands of a few nobles as a jealously guarded privilege. It therefore represents the activity of too small a part of the nation, and to the greater number it was a thing tremendous indeed, but external and remote.

Only when fallen into ruin did they cease to be so. To romanticism, at last, they capitulated, and became a prey to the literature by which England made herself one of the chief instruments of that movement. If they were before then but partially national, Sir Walter Scott made them wholly so. If before they had been a frequent but obsolete feature of a nobleman's architecture they then became its necessary dignity. If a ruin did not exist, somewhere in the landscape of his property, within sight of his Doric temple and bowling green, a ruin must be hastily erected. The omission was the more economically

supplied, from the fact that the new castle was but a few inches thick, possessed but a single front, and courted decay in preference to repair.

But the house from which he contemplated it was in fact developed from the more warlike progenitors of which his new ruin was the effete, if aristocratic, descendant. This is a notable instance of the continuity which, beneath all their changes, underlay English architecture and English politics.

Even the Norman keep, for the sake of this continuity, had been erected most often in places which represented an English estate to which military service had long been rendered, and accommodated its normal rectangular form to the earth mound of a Saxon fortification. The square keeps, however, proved more lasting than the round, and it was these which were to lead by a gradual evolution to the Elizabethan house. First, at the time when the Early English style was giving place to the Decorated, the keep developed itself into an open court with its halls ranged against one or two of its sides, strengthened by gatehouse and towers, and surrounded by concentric wards. Such a plan, when the need for defence became less imperative, naturally gave place to one of greater regularity. The quadrangle of the Tudor house was its logical successor. And little by little, some features also were borrowed from the Yeoman's house and much of the feeling of contemporary Gothic, its order and growing symmetry.

So, out of the Norman fortress with all its exclusive associations, came what is perhaps the most English product of our architecture: a thing 'built to live in', as Lord Bacon said, and therefore good to look on; a focus of old history, territorial loyalties and a gentler feudalism; made from the quarries of its own hills

and merging itself in the lines of them; quiet with the repose which comes of a deliberate and fitting growth; ordered by a spontaneous discipline and varied by a spontaneous freedom; strong, and of a natural simplicity, till foreign fashions marred it. A northern air weathers its walls, and a misty sunlight colours them; and shadow, which is for architecture the moving life, passes, not here, as in the older Gothic, to give the strangeness of things half seen, nor to strengthen firmly the long lines of classic cornices, but to add yet something to this liberty, touching with an idle accent the broken outlines, as it wanders over gables and battlements across a home half cloister and half fort.

IV

THE new architecture carried with it an unfamiliar ideal. The unconstrained pliancy of the old Gothic had given it a peculiar power for an age, which, within a spiritual domination, had been intensely individualistic. By the adaptive play of which it was unusually capable, it had shaped itself to every variety of circumstance. It had grown around the impulsive movement of mediaevalism, and given, in each age and country, a new outline to its gesture. Its cathedrals had been built out of the excess of the popular vitality, and reflecting it. It was organically determined, and revealed of necessity the forces which had given it form. And because it had everywhere this character, this necessary faithfulness of expression, English Gothic, in all that made it a peculiar type, had been nationally significant.

Throughout this time the preoccupations of the mediaeval spirit had been theological. In its relation to art it

had been unself-conscious. But now, almost confronting it, came the ideal of the Renaissance, taking account, in the light of the new self-knowledge which classical literature had given, of the formative value of art and architecture itself. A new vision of life, a new method, or rule, of living it, was coming into view. And towards its attainment art was to be a helper, and become a means while it was also a large part of the end. Here was a profound innovation of feeling. Gothic, it is true, had possessed its instructive side, and had set out, in sculpture and fresco, to teach its legend. But this was to be more than instruction. Architecture was not here required to tell a story or point beyond itself to any alien truth. Between art and an idealized human nature there was to be a perfect correspondence, and the correspondence was to effect and make real the idealization. But if so, the exact form of art by which that nature, in its unideal condition, was to surround itself became doubly important. And since the ideal was to this generation so vague—a certain larger sort of life merely, not yet visualized in detail—the architecture which was supposed to reflect it must have an orthodoxy like that of a Papal deliverance upon a point of faith. Rome, but pagan Rome this time, was once more the arbiter. The Italian style was descended by a sort of apostolic succession from the classic humanists, and those who built in it might hope to induce the humanist spirit to dwell with them. And this, indeed, was not a misreading of the classic intention. The ideal of scale in architecture, the adjustment in its buildings of space and mass, of freedom and limit, the span and cover of its domes—all had reference to a human standard. They were a kind of externalization of the intimate conditions of our physical being, and life, finding itself at ease there, might gain a conscious keenness, and

a new contentment, and become ennobled because perfectly expressed.

And this the Renaissance attempted in two ways. On the one hand, there was a carefully studied proportion, derived from Greece; on the other, derived from Rome, an enlargement of this, not in any one direction, but in the richness and scale of the whole scheme.

So far, and in the abstract, there was no reason why England should not have a national architecture conforming to this ideal. The difficulty was the inevitable canonization of the Italian expression of it. No nation can make its own, by a mere act of adoption, a style which has been evolved under a different climate and moulded by a different race. The style we sought to transfer had descended ultimately from a city-state, and came by way of city-states. It was essentially an architecture of towns therefore, and, even in its country uses, preserved in the terraces with which it was then surrounded, the tradition of flat places and of streets. It was, therefore, a style of level lines, of façades and frontal effects. And this we attempted to impose on a tradition derived, as has been seen, from the feudal castles of a wild territory, built on uneven sites, four-square, and handing down even to the ordered times of the fifteenth century some heritage of irregular and jagged line. More fatal, because more permanent, were the divergences of climate. Where the North had sloped back a gable to throw off the rains, the South had projected a cornice to be a protection from the sun. Heat, the need for which had given prominence to the English chimney and rendered it a central point of architectural composition, was precisely what the new style was designed to exclude. There was, in fact, between the two styles and the needs which underlay them, a real incompatibility.

But a century was to pass before this became apparent. As usually happens, it was at first in its unessential form that the foreign influence began to filter through. There was a dilettante taste for the detail of Italian architecture before there was any enthusiasm for its structure; the mannerism preceded the substance, and the superficial mark was sought for rather than the abstract conception. So far as that conception penetrated at all it was only the ideal of grandeur, and not that of proportion, which was entertained. Consequently, although the Tudor house became encrusted with Italian reliefs, the English construction remained unaltered. And the first touch of the new influence, coming as it did in the hands of the Italian sculptors whom Wolsey introduced, and as we see it, for instance, at Hampton Court, was harmless enough. The two elements did not combine, but, severally, they were satisfactory. In this way it came about that beneath the English vault of the Royal chapel was placed the sculptured tomb of Torrigiano, and Henry's great palace of Nonesuch was decorated by 'the most excellent artificers of different nations'.

The case became more serious when these 'excellent artificers' were drawn no longer from Italy, but from Germany and the Low Countries. Forms which had been invented by Greeks, perverted by Romans, handed on to Italians, recovered from Italian 'pattern books', and subjected to the misuse of Teutons, reached the summit of incongruity beneath a Tudor gable. The control of the 'architect' had not yet arisen in English building and the German artists were able to discharge their heavy caprices without hindrance, and even to admiration. For there is no moment in architecture so dangerous as that when self-consciousness first supervenes upon an unorganized and unquestioning tradition.

But it was not in this German ornament that the real clash came. For behind that there had always continued the traditional English construction. This had, indeed, been advancing in a direction which made the victory of the Italian style more easy. The south side of the Tudor quadrangle had been thrown open, the single façade was taking the place of the courtyard, the mouldings were becoming ever more horizontal and the design ever more uniform.

Nevertheless, in spite of this approximation, it might seem at first that the advent of Inigo Jones marks the close of the national period of our architecture. It is not merely that Palladianism was incompatible with our conditions. It is that the period of individual genius had succeeded to the period of common endeavour. The architectural design no longer passes through the modifying influence of a free craftsmanship ; the mason becomes a mechanical intermediary, and the architect may build, through him, as he pleases. Work so done should possess a finer unity, it might attain a finer beauty, it could hardly be equally national. Yet it is possible to exaggerate the architect's independence. His originality lies in making new combinations, but the elements he combines are comparatively fixed. He cannot wholly override custom, nor contradict tradition, and his individuality must express itself within the formulas of the past. We are not, therefore, here concerned to follow out the achievements of single architects, so much as to watch the struggle of two such formulas.

Although our most national architecture, the Tudor, did something, as we saw, to prepare the way for the Italian style, yet, when it came, there was an element of paradox in its triumph. It was essentially a scenic architecture which Inigo Jones—himself, we are told,

a designer originally of stage-masques—brought to Whitehall. It was a fitting background for a life somewhat studied and artificial; akin rather to the pomps of Venice than to the half-rustic usages of London. It might serve for palaces from whose ceilings Louis, disguised as Apollo, looked down on Louis disguised as *grand monarque*; English life was less urbane. Yet it seemed as though England, habitually averse as it had showed itself to any fundamental cleavage with the past, and preferring always the slow adaptations of practice to the sudden reversals of theory, had been bewitched by Inigo Jones into accepting the new formula in all its integrity. In real truth this was but the first evidence of that instability which the rise of the professional designer was bound to introduce. The national tradition was once more to re-assert itself and show its strength, but, in accordance with this change, it must do so by embodying itself in individual genius. The influence of Inigo Jones was met by that of Christopher Wren.

In Christopher Wren the architectural tradition which we have watched forming itself from the earliest point in our history becomes at last personified, and faces the most curious of its conflicts. The very entry of Wren upon his task is characteristic. Our greatest achievements, it has been remarked, have often sprung from a patient attention upon what the course of events might bring forth, and have appeared so unpremeditated that they have sometimes been called accidental. So, almost casually, Wren turned from mathematics and the chair of astronomy to accept from King Charles his appointment to a new profession. Equally characteristic is it that, save for some brief months in France, he had never left England. This fact, which makes his mastery of Renaissance principles the more amazing, fitted him to

give them that native interpretation which was still lacking. Had he studied in Italy, like Inigo Jones, and gained a scholar's enthusiasm for the letter of his creed, he might have rivalled the perfections of the Banqueting Hall, but the English tradition of reasonability and compromise and leniency towards the past might never have employed the one opportunity which was afforded it for a brilliant manifestation. 'To reconcile the old Gothick to a better manner' became his stated object. And the people, as was to be expected, shared this mixed taste to the point of indecision. The suggestion of a long nave for the new St. Paul's was 'thought impertinent, this country not using processions'. Nothing, it might seem, but a more classical plan could satisfy a nation enfranchised by Inigo Jones and made the equals of Italy. Yet when that was put forward it was deemed 'too unfamiliar and unlike what they had been accustomed to look on'. But Wren could everywhere combine the old and the new, and retain the dignity of the classic without losing the tact with which the Gothic had shaped itself to every use, the simple sincerity with which it had expressed the ends it had to serve. If he builds a country house it still clings picturesquely to its site; in his palace at Hampton Court he can recognize the roof and chimneys without incongruity. And the classical spirit which he could follow without formalism, he could express also without rhetoric, rendering it in his City churches with a reticence that is almost Horatian in its mixture of seriousness and winning artifice, and compensating by the unity of his conceptions what was lost, with Gothic, of imaginative heat. So fitting was Wren's work to the moment of evolution at which he stood, and so completely did he reconcile the two forces which had met, that his inventions may seem almost

predetermined. But they were none the less original because in a borrowed and inflexible style he could find a place for the national habit of centuries.

Even so, with the way laid open, there was to be a reaction. The great architectural posts were commanded by intrigue, and the way to them was by subservience to capricious fashions. Architecture 'proportioned according to the Rules' had a kind of mystic sanctity beyond its merits; the theory was a fine one, but the Rules were observed too diligently. 'Like a breeze,' Plato had said, 'bearing healthfulness from pure regions'—*ὥσπερ αὔρα φέρουσα ἀπὸ χρηστῶν τόπων ὑγίειαν*—architecture, also, rightly proportioned to our instinct, might surround one, suddenly, with the same well-being. Only, what expansion of the spirit was likely to come in a room deprived of its window in order to preserve the integrity of the Palladian façade, and of its fire because Italy had no precedent for a chimney just at this point? Bacon's 'Houses are built to live in, not to look on', had been nearer the English feeling. Yet so strong was Palladio's influence that neither the old native prejudice nor the great compromise of Wren were able fully to withstand it. The prevalence in the Renaissance of unreasonable and *a priori* formulas is a measure of the failure of the national tradition, itself so indulgently practical, to assimilate it. And this failure was due, most of all, to the fact that in place of natural growth, our architecture was controlled by fashion, and that it depended upon patronage rather than on a common need. Nevertheless there was, for two generations more, a school where the tradition persisted. Of these architects the most interesting for this subject is Vanbrugh. Scrupulousness in the treatment of material had led us to the faults of the Perpendicular style; here it was the

excess of another national quality which spoilt Blenheim. Vanbrugh aimed at emphasizing the solid; to this end he sacrificed detail to mass, and convenience of plan to grandeur of grouping. He thus intensified the massive ideal of the tradition, and united it to the scenic ideal of the Renaissance. But this also he intensified, and, not content with its purpose of providing an architecture perfectly humanized for men, he sought by a gigantesque setting to persuade men that they were giants, and yet remained too British to achieve the imagination of Baroque. His work, in spite of its relative inferiority, is far more suggestive of national distinction than that of Inigo Jones himself. It shows us northern instincts come to an artistic self-consciousness that belongs to the South, and borrowing its formulas for a foreign purpose. It is an example of the danger of any too sudden realization of the expressive or symbolic functions of art. And, so realized, it is natural that Vanbrugh should have made of them a pictorial rather than an architectural use. For his pictorial treatment Reynolds, almost alone, has praised him. The treatment was out of place, and Vanbrugh's work is sometimes crushing. For although architecture expresses what is abstract and universal, and escapes one danger of the pictorial arts in that it can attempt no description, yet even so it may 'protest too much'. But an art's limitation is also its opportunity; if English architecture is usually, unlike Vanbrugh's, reticent and reserved, it has perhaps found the language most fitted to the genius of the nation and the conventions of the art.

The best work that followed adds little to our knowledge. It was, for the most part, a reflection of Wren's example, still possessed of his sanity, but with a weakening confidence and something less of Gothic compromise. In

the hands of Gibbs, that example had produced exteriors, at Oxford and in London, hardly inferior to Wren's own. But there is no need to follow the last phases of the tradition through Hawksmoor and Kent to the times of Chambers and Dance. It died, not ingloriously, in the great prison of Newgate.

But alongside the conflict here indicated, old forms of Gothic, the documents of a pathetic enthusiasm, had in some places lived on. In Oxford especially a belated Gothic grew up side by side with new experiments and strange quests—blended, for instance, in the windows and pilasters of Brasenose Chapel in a curiously peaceful conjunction. For while the conservatism of the place guarded the more ecclesiastical tradition, yet, owing to its divorce from practical aims, it came about that the search for style, and the expensive devotion to some supposed *a priori* principle of beauty, when they invaded English architecture, found in the Oxford amateurs their friendliest environment. And thus the indulgent continuity that belongs to our architecture is at Oxford concentrated and made visible. England has always tended to specialize her romances and accords to single figures and favoured places a full measure of the romance that, perhaps less than others, she interweaves into the complexion of ordinary life; and at Oxford, where the outlines of five centuries are joined against a single sky, she permits, here almost alone, in the strange sympathy of their gathering, the fantastic liberty of a dream.

Above all, the real force of our tradition during these years was running elsewhere, in the cottages and the small manors. Here survived the strong local character, the thrift of material and its thoughtful use, the steep roofs and the Gothic carpentry. Resourcefulness of execution rather than great schemes of scientific con-

struction had marked the old builders. Here were the same methods, and, at the end, the same repose and fitness to the site. A certain levelness of line and an emphasis on cornice or string course crept into them and was assimilated. A few traces of Dutch influence, also, in the eastern counties, served but to emphasize their characteristic variety. For here, as always, the new elements were adapted to the old tradition. That sense of detail, which seems to come naturally to dwellers in flat low countries, from whose monotony every detail gains an added value and a minuter attention, had given the Flemish architects, as it gave their painters, a love of the small peculiarities of things and their fine delineation. But for England as a whole these conditions were absent, and even reversed: the simplicity of its architecture gaining something of its value by virtue of the contrasting intricacy of wood and pasture upon the contours behind. And the detail, the studied brickwork which England owed to the Flemish immigrants, was converted from their trivial patterns until it served to emphasize that independent quality in a building's members and its materials to which English custom characteristically paid respect.

But not in this only English Architecture was guided by a territorial sense, and penetrated by influences of the land. Morris, whose work is itself an evidence of their reality, has so described them as to sum up most fitly the history of the whole: 'The land is a little land, sirs, too much shut up within the narrow seas to have much space for swelling into hugeness: there are no great wastes overwhelming in their dreariness, no great solitude of forests, no terrible untrodden mountain walls: all is measured, mingled, varied, gliding easily one thing into another: little rivers, little plains, swelling speedily-

changing uplands, all beset with handsome, orderly trees: little hills, little mountains netted over with the walls of sheep walks: all is little, yet not foolish, or blank, but serious rather, and abundant of meaning for such as choose to seek it. . . . For as was the land, such was the art of it while folk yet troubled themselves about such things; it strove little to impress people either by pomp or ingenuity: not unseldom it fell into commonplace, rarely it rose into majesty; yet it was never oppressive, never a slave's nightmare or an insolent boast: and at its best it had an inventiveness, an individuality that grander styles have never overpassed. . . . It must be a hard heart, I think, that does not love it, whether a man has been born among it, like ourselves, or has come wonderingly on its simplicity from all the grandeur over seas.'

V

ECLECTICISM was always present in English architecture, though the currents that came to us were tributary to a native purpose of our own. But eclecticism is now the name of a vain trust, that if we select from every source what seems suited to our need, some natural order of evolution will blend them into system. By such acceptance, it is said, were the fusions possible which created the national styles of the past. But in the past, where historical knowledge was limited, and the passage of example so slow and timely, architecture could keep pace with innovation without losing touch of precedent.

The Greek movement of the Adams produced a certain decorative beauty, but it had no more touch with per-

manent forces than the grotesque Gothic of Strawberry Hill. The final reaction to Gothic was, indeed, a necessary consequence of that new individualism of which the French Revolution was in part the cause, and in part the type. But this individualism was to find artistic fruitfulness no longer in cathedrals. It produced poetry; but in architecture it was barren. The existence of the professional architect, the decay of the crafts, had too profoundly modified the conditions, even had the inspiration been present.

But these adventures were all of them archaistic. They made conscientious reference to a living work in the past and mistook this for a vitality in the present. A formative impulse was replaced by an informed pedantry.

This was the opportunity of nineteenth-century eloquence. *lὼ lώ, δῶμα δῶμα καὶ πρόμοι.* Yet neither Ruskin nor any other has laid bare the true relations of political and artistic greatness, which are rarely found in the accord his theory would desire. Whatever their initial correspondence, the two endeavours work in fields subject to different laws and different chances. The results of the one follow more swiftly; those of the other, more tardy in their coming, are suffered or enjoyed for a longer continuance. They are differently capable of reaction and recovery; the external forces of the world hold over each a different control.

We cannot force from the state of its architecture the promise of a nation's greatness or the warning of its decay. But these sanctions, borrowed from socialistic or monarchical creeds, are not necessary to the art. It does not require to be made dependent on doctrine or bound with political fortune: it has in itself too magnificent a capacity and too intrinsic an importance. And